

We are pressing for increased coordination with the British on counter-narcotics; with the Germans on policing and police training; and with the Italians on justice sector reform. In addition to the traditional smuggling routes through Iran and Turkey, reports indicate a continued movement of heroin shipments north from Afghanistan through the central Asian states, Pakistan and India en route to international markets.

Our strongest partners in these efforts must be those consumer nations where the drugs are destined. The financial, resource, and intelligence requirements to defeat the scourge are not our sole responsibility. The administration must seek commitments from Europe and elsewhere to share this burden, where they get 90 percent of the heroin.

Let me give my colleagues an example of a successful international operation. Operation Containment is an ongoing effort by the DEA. They recently arrested 15 members of a heroin trafficking organization and seized 7.4 tons of morphine base in Turkey. Morphine base can be converted to heroin at a ratio of one to one with a chemical. This is the largest seizure of morphine base ever made. To put the magnitude of this seizure in perspective, the amount seized was more than four times the total worldwide morphine base seizures made in 2000.

There are legitimate uses of the chemical acetic anhydride in industry. Countries that produce this chemical must do their part by restricting or controlling its sale and transportation to legitimate consumers.

The Department of Defense has seen the magnitude of the transshipment problem with three separate seizures by the U.S. Navy operating in the Gulf region. The first seizure was made on December 15 when a motorized dhow was apprehended in the Arabian Gulf. Two tons of narcotics were seized, and three of the 15-man crew were identified as having possible ties to al Qaeda. On December 18, two more dhows were intercepted. Those seizures yielded drugs worth more than \$10 million.

I am passionate about this subject. I have chaired a hearing on Afghanistan just last week. Many of the members of my subcommittee have visited the region. The administration must extract commitments from the Europeans to pull their own weight. As leaders of the coalition of Afghanistan and Iraq, the Department of Defense must be compelled to address the growth, storage, processing, and transshipment of drugs in the region. The bullets and bombs used against our own troops are purchased with illicit funds. The Department of State and the DEA must be resourced adequately to address and to assist Afghanistan in reestablishing a viable criminal justice system so that their own poppy ban can be effectively enforced.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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LONGEST MAJOR STRIKE IN UFCW ENDS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. BECERRA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, I am here tonight to discuss the end of a long strike; in fact, the longest major strike in the history of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, and the largest and longest strike in the history of the supermarket industry, a strike that saw the United Food and Commercial Workers hold the line in southern California.

The dispute, which involved some 60,000 UFCW members employed at 852 Safeway-owned Vons and Pavillions stores, Kroger-owned Ralphs and Albertsons stores, began back in October 11, 2003. Officials for the grocery store chain said their workers had a Cadillac health plan that the stores could not maintain in a market with nonunion competitors such as Wal-Mart. I am not sure I would call the plan in question a Cadillac plan, but the proposal to replace it was clearly a Yugo.

Supermarket workers in southern California average about \$12 to \$14 an hour, and most work less than 40 hours a week, not by choice. Under the employer's proposal, after 3 years an average worker would earn about \$12.30 an hour, that is \$369 a week before taxes are taken out, or about \$19,000 a year. That is a salary that can keep a single mom and her children just above the poverty line; but cut her health care benefits or shift several thousand dollars worth of health care costs from the company on to her and a self-supporting working family can be reduced to near poverty.

In fact, many workers will drop coverage because it will be too expensive and move over to Medi-Cal, which is California's Medicaid program for the elderly, poor, and disabled, as well as to other State and Federal programs for low-income workers. In my mind, this is safety net exploitation by employers. This marks a shift from the employer's books to the ledgers of the American taxpayer.

Thankfully, for 5 months the picket line remained strong, members remained united, and customers honored

the workers' picket lines. This is a testament to the rank-and-file UFCW workers and to the leadership of UFCW local leaders. To people like Rick Icaza, President, and Rod Diamond, Secretary-Treasurer of UFCW Local 770; to Connie Leyva, President of UFCW Local 1428; Michael Straeter, President of UFCW Local 1442; to George Hartwell, President of Local 1036, Greg Conger, President of Local 324; Bill Lathrop, President of Local 1167; and Mickey Kasparian, President of Local 135 of the UFCW, we say thank you to you, and we hope that you will express our sincerest congratulations and thanks to all of your men and women in your locals who fought and stood tall throughout this entire 5-month long process.

Every day support for the fight for affordable health care grew stronger. Community and religious leaders joined the cause. The southern California supermarket strike became a national cause as well. There were rallies, picket lines, and hand billing across America.

The men and women on the picket lines are genuine heroes. Their sacrifice for affordable family health care has motivated and activated workers across the Nation. To the Webb family in Los Angeles I send a special message of esteem and pride. Andre and Dee, you, like many of your brothers and sisters, persevered. Christmas was tough this past December, but you weathered these difficult times in a way that makes all of us who are parents so very, very proud. And Andre, your daughter A.J. wrote you a letter for Valentine's Day, which many of us had a chance to read during the father-daughter dance at school, which you will never forget. She understood your fight and offered the best reason to stand firm. At 8 years of age, A.J. is already giving us a glimpse of the next generation of leaders for America.

The labor struggle in southern California is one manifestation of a very large national debate on health care. Lack of access to quality health care and escalating health care costs are issues of concern to all Americans, particularly to communities that are minority and very poor, that suffer the highest rates of uninsured Americans, and are also among those that are least well covered because of disproportionate and disparate health care received by these communities.

The lack of insurance is devastating to millions of families across America. We must make every effort to find ways to extend coverage and to work to end the erosion of employment-based health care coverage due to rising out-of-pocket health care costs that make insurance unaffordable for many workers. If the supermarket giants, profitable, growing corporations, can launch an attack on health care benefits, then every employer is sure to follow. They have sounded the alarm that the American health care system is under siege.